

New state system matches births to abusive parents

Information system matched new births to FIA database for first time on March 7

A new system that links newborn children in families with a history of serious abuse or neglect matched the two for the first time March 7.

The new process alerts the Family Independence Agency to births in families where children have been previously removed for abuse or neglect and parental rights have been terminated. The system could match any of Michigan's 130,000 annual live births to an FIA database of 34,000 parents who have had their parental rights terminated for other children.

The results alert Child Protective Services investigators across Michigan to call on the newborn's family.

"This is an effort to ensure children are safe in households where serious abuse or neglect has previously occurred," said Gov. John Engler March 20. "Working together, the Family Independence Agency and Department of Community Health will cooperate to ensure no harm comes to newborns."

The new system was an-

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Gogebic, Marquette counties hit zero

U. P. counties are 83rd and 84th Project Zero sites to achieve goal

The Gogebic County Project Zero program reached "zero" Feb. 9, when all their target Family Independence Program (FIP) cases were reporting earnings. When the Marquette County Project Zero program reached "zero" on Feb. 23 it became the 84th Project Zero site to reach "zero" since September 1997.

With the achievements, 84 of 103 Project Zero sites have now reached zero one or more times.

Gogebic County FIA director Dale MacDonald said achieving zero is the result of teamwork and dedication to task.

"Reaching zero in Gogebic County involved the efforts of staff from all of the units in the office," he said.

"In particular, I want to recognize the dedication and hard work of the Project Zero coordinator, family independence manager and the family independence staff, along with staff from Work First and the 4C of the Upper Peninsula, who worked closely with our customers and

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FIA Icon for April 2001

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Intercepted letters

To: FIA Icon
Date: Feb. 14, 2001
Subj: January article

I was interested in the article about Gail Petri's volunteer work in Costa Rica. I applaud the work she is doing as well as the effort and need. My husband and I also volunteer with an organization called Helps, International. We went Feb. 17 with a Helps medical team heading for Guatemala for 10 days. We just received our tax information from the organization and were told that the IRS does not consider the airfare associated with the trips as a tax-deductible expense. The information given in the January Icon said that was deductible, so maybe folks need to know that they should check with their tax advisors about deductions.

[Shelley Miller-O'Neill](#)

FIA Division of Community Supportive Services, Lansing

To: FIA director Doug Howard
Date: Feb. 12, 2001
Subj: FIA Icon

I am contacting you to express our collective dual-county appreciation for your willingness to highlight the essay "Finding the Hero Within" in the January Icon. Not only was that a significant honor for Ms. Bauer, her words very appropriately echo what we have been trying to accomplish locally for a number of years now—the development of a seamless service system driven by a true partnership of our customers, staff, other community resource providers and Central Office. The words and deeds of a local staff person increases the recognition that all local employees so richly deserve for their selfless contributions toward making that ongoing customer focused partnership the cornerstone of our day-to-day operations. Thanks for letting Bea speak for everyone in Charlevoix-Emmet.

[Terry Salacina](#), Director

Charlevoix-Emmet County Family Independence Agency

To: Food Stamp Error Group
Date: Feb. 7, 2001
Subj: Rates

In our monthly logs we always present the six-month moving average which smooths out most of the month to month blips. The May 2000 to October 2000 six-month average is at 9.85 percent. This marks the first time a stable indicator (year-to-date average of more than three months or six-month average) has broken the 10 percent threshold. Also, note the nice downward slope of the line on our February 6, 2001 report. There appears to be continued downward momentum.

[Stephen Hilker](#), Director

FIA Office of Quality Assurance, Lansing

■ [See a special intercepted letter on page 5.](#)



FIA Icon

*a publication of Michigan's
Family Independence Agency*

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard
Director, Family Independence Agency



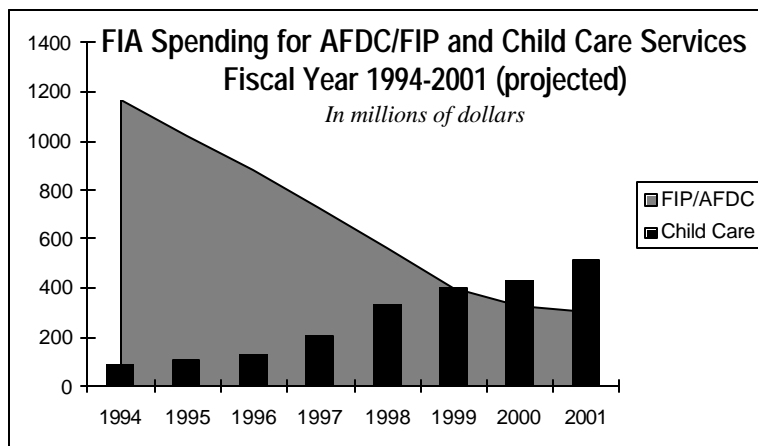
Considering our future

As we look forward to spring and the warm weather season, I think it's important to reflect on our success under welfare reform and consider our prospects for the future. Like many others in state government all over the United States, I have been meeting with decision-makers and elected officials on the upcoming reauthorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families—the federal welfare reform program passed in 1996. Its six-year life comes up for reauthorization in 2002. When the U. S. Congress passed welfare reform and started the TANF program in 1996, there were many goals. A principal goal was to reduce the number of families receiving public assistance checks by helping these families enter the work force and pursue economic self-sufficiency. Other goals were to build families and reverse the trend of minor parents receiving public assistance.

While an exalted goal, the purpose of TANF was not to end poverty in the United States. The U. S. government learned through the “Great Society” programs of the 1960s that it couldn't buy its way out of poverty. Governments redistribute wealth created in the private sector and cannot in themselves create permanent lasting jobs. Poverty declined dramatically in recent years because of business expansion and good government policy like that represented under the federal welfare reform act. As such, we hope welfare reform is a means for families to begin their journey out of poverty, but it is only one piece of a larger puzzle. Like Michigan, most states have seen unprecedented declines in public assistance rolls since

the implementation of TANF. Ironically, some persons would use this as ammunition to fund TANF at levels lower than those appropriated or allocated in 1996, when states received grants equivalent to their 1994 spending levels. Yet no one considers those dollars poorly spent, and for good reason.

Since TANF began, the old culture of welfare ended as public assistance became a hand up, not a handout. The Family Independence Program caseload in Michigan is lower than it's been since the 1970s. This



was achieved without a linked increase in child abuse or abandonment, one of the feared tradeoffs when welfare reform was being negotiated in the middle 1990s. For families that can work, public assistance has been replaced by support services like child day care and transportation that assist families while they climb the work ladder. In the FIA last fiscal year, we spent more dollars supporting work through child day care reimbursement (about \$427 million) than we spent on FIP benefits (about \$325 million). This compares to FY 1994, when Michigan expended \$1.16 billion on AFDC and less than \$90 million on child care services. This is a remarkable and positive turnaround.

As we pursue TANF reauthorization in the coming year, we can all reflect on these achievements. Nothing says more about an assistance program than results, and TANF has helped states achieve results not considered possible. I am grateful for the role you played in this effort in Michigan.

Gogebic & Marquette PZ sites hit zero

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found creative solutions to the problems which stood in the way of achieving success.”

“Zero” is the point in time when all target FIP cases are working and earning income. Target cases are those open 60 days, required to participate in the Work First program and expected to have earnings.



Dale MacDonald

Marquette

FIA director Julia Hadas said the achievement in the Upper Peninsula's most populous county was the result of, “Innovation, collaboration and dedication embraced by our staff, community partners and customers.



Julia Hadas

Project Zero is a cooperative effort involving state and local agencies, businesses and service providers.

“County staff deserve congratulations,” said state FIA director Douglas E. Howard. “They and their community partners have done an outstanding job. I also want to congratulate our hard-working FIP customers and the employers who hired them.”

New birth match system begins

continued from page 1

nounced last September when FIA director Douglas E. Howard announced the partnership to match information on the FIA's Services Worker Support System with vital statistics at the Department of Community Health (DCH).

“The issue was raised in a report by the Office of the Children's Ombudsman,” said Howard. “A serious case of child abuse that resulted in death of one child last summer escalated our efforts. We are pleased to say the system has been tested and works.”

State Department of Community Health director James K. Haveman Jr. said his agency finalized the reporting process with links to the DCH Vital Statistics section.

“Our innovation will help Child Protective Services identify children that may be at risk,” said Haveman. “This partnership is focused on the safety of the child and will allow for early intervention when needed.”

State law requires the FIA to do an assessment of newborns in families whose parental rights were terminated for other children. The new process resolves an earlier shortcoming.

“Michigan law requires our agency to do an assessment of risk to newborn children in homes where children were permanently removed,” Howard said. “Before, without the link to Community Health data, we were unable to verify new births. Now we will be able to fulfill our obligations to newborn children in potentially risky situations.”

All matches produced through the reporting system will be verified at Family Independence Agency county or Wayne County district offices to ensure the match is to a family with prior parental rights terminations. In cases where the match is correct, CPS staff will conduct an investigation of the household to ensure the child is not at risk from factors that earlier led to termination of rights.

“Child Protective Services workers are empowered by state law to investigate and ensure the child is safe,” said Howard. “If the evidence indicates risk factors are present, CPS staff will take appropriate action up to and including removing the child from the home and petitioning a Family Court to terminate the parents' rights.”

Under Michigan's five-category CPS process, the range of appropriate actions could include taking no action and closing the case, referring the family to community services, opening a case or, in the most serious scenario, removing the child and petitioning for an end to parental rights.

“The FIA believes families are the best place for children,” said Howard. “However, when children are not safe with their families the FIA is required to take steps to ensure the child's safety. This is not a case of big government invading a family's privacy, but government doing its duty to protect at-risk children and shepherd the public trust.”

Prior to development of the new system, the FIA questioned a number of other state Child and Family Services agencies across the nation and found that none had an automated system, and each faced the same problems in trying to identify these families.

Special intercepted letter

To: Jean Hoffman, FIA Adoption Services
Date: Dec. 18, 2000
Subj: Adoption services

I would like to express our sincere thanks to you and the staff of the Adoption Program for the creation of the BUMP Program in Eagle Village. Our 15-year-old son, Brian, has been participating in this program for about one month. Brian was able to come home for a long weekend at Thanksgiving and is home for a weekend at this time. I wish I could describe to you the changes we have witnessed in Brian since he has been in the program. This was a young man who has had no motivation at all—in his personal hygiene, schoolwork, home chores or anything. My husband and I were at the end of our sanity. This short time in BUMP has given us a young man who has matured—is now becoming interested in his personal care and learning self-discipline. I can only imagine what another couple of months in this program will show us.

It has been a pleasure to meet and talk with James Hicks, the program director. His understanding and compassion for adoptive families is wonderfully comforting. We are grateful because, having been an adoptive family, he understands the feelings and the height of emotions that sometimes occur.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to and for Pedro Alvarez, our adoption subsidy specialist. He has been so tremendously cooperative and helpful. He has guided us through the maze of necessary paperwork to get our son into the program. In regard to general issues, Mr. Alvarez and Ms. Tenna Draper have been most helpful. What a wonderful change from what we went through before these changes came along. It takes a real load off the shoulders of adoptive parents to have one less fight on their hands to receive the help they need.

I would also like to share with you our feeling about Rick Marshall. Over the past several years Rick has been our pillar of strength. I firmly believe the reason our family of six adopted children is relatively successful is because of Rick's support. When we felt there was no support out there anywhere, Rick was always there. He has talked with our kids on his own time after work when there was conflict and we felt helpless. Our two oldest children have appeared in Probate Court on more than one occasion. Rick has been with us anytime we asked him to be there to support us. Even though our last adoption was completed three years ago, Rick has maintained an interest in our kids—their school grades, extracurricular activities, and the direction their lives are going in general. I find it interesting that this man has been willing to help our family even though the adoption of our first two children were not through FIA. Rick is a tremendously wonderful gentleman and I hope everyone connected with FIA adoptions is aware of this.

I feel it is very important that you hear from adoptive families regarding these really spectacular people and this absolutely great program for these kids who have so many, many issues. Unfortunately, as hard as we parents try, we are not able to erase those painful memories and experiences from the past. I believe with all my heart as an adoptive mother that without these powerful strengths to support families many of use would have given up long ago. Now, perhaps, with these wonderful people and programs we will be able to complete our desire—to send our children out into the world to be happy, healthy adults who are able to take care of and support themselves.

Beverly Budzynski
Houghton Lake

■ The BUMP Program is an FIA contract agency specializing in short-term post-adoption services for families.

Jackson County mom of three first achiever in 2001

By Sherry Hicks, Program Manager
Jackson County Family Independence Agency
Telephone (517) 780-7040

Jackson, Mich.—Roxanne Taylor, a Jackson County mother of three, was honored as the initial Achiever of the Month for 2001 at ceremonies Jan. 26 in Jackson.

Roxanne was presented the award while family, friends, and her favorite college professor looked on. During her awards presentation Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard commended Roxanne on her hard work and determination to make a better life for her children.

"Roxanne agreed to accept this award as a representative of the many recipients and their families who are also working toward independence from the welfare system," said Howard. "I believe she is fine example for others to emulate."

Kids motivated mom

During her remarks at the ceremony Roxanne credited her children Shannon, age 3, Jacob, 5, and Cassandra, 7, as her motivators. One of Roxanne's mentors, Prof. Curt Cremeans, said Roxanne was an inspiration for all who worked with her and praised her for her determination.

"Although we are here to salute Roxanne, it is clear this honor also reflects very favorably on the Jackson County FIA staff and our community partners who have made significant contributions to her

success," said Howard.

"There have also been many other people, doing a number of things that have helped to clear the way for Roxanne to succeed.

"I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank the Jackson

County FIA, South Central Michigan Works!, the Community Action Agency, the Early Head Start Program, the Lions Club and the many family and friends who have contributed to her climb toward economic independence and self-sufficiency."

A single mother starts a new journey

Roxanne first became acquainted with the Jackson County FIA in March 1998. At that time she was separated from her husband and had three young children. Roxanne was enrolled at Jackson Community College and was majoring in accounting and business. When her husband left he took the family's only working vehicle and did not pay any child



Roxanne Taylor

support. Roxanne had no transportation to find work and applied for assistance.

Through FIA she received Family Independence Program funds, Medicaid, day care and food stamps benefits. While Roxanne was grateful for the support, she did not feel good about receiving assistance and was determined not to make welfare a legacy. She wanted a better future for her family.

Hurdles to overcome

Roxanne had last worked in October 1995. Her children were young, and she needed to find appropriate day care. Her son Jacob is visually impaired and needed a day care provider who was sensitive to his special needs. Roxanne was enrolled in school and the only income in her household was



To Strengthen Michigan Families

Achiever of the Month

Jacob's SSI payment. She did not have a working vehicle and she was dependent on her mother for transportation.

Roxanne applied for assistance to stabilize her household income and continued to attend Jackson Community College. She received an associate's degree in finance, accounting and business in June 1999.

Roxanne continued to struggle trying to find dependable transportation for her to get to work as well as find adequate child care for her son, Jacob. She was able to repair her vehicle so she could start seeking employment after her graduation. She refinanced her home in December 1999 and purchased a different used car. She became employed full-time in March 2000 and is no longer receiving cash benefits. When she began her new job as an administrative accounts receivable assistant, South Central Michigan Works! supplied funds for car repairs and work clothing.

Many & mutual admirers

Roxanne credits the support of her mother as a reason that she is where she is today. Her mother always helped her with her day care and transportation problems. Roxanne's mother and sister assisted in caring for her children during her hospitalization in December 1998, also.

Because of Jacob's visual impairment the Lions Club purchased a computer printer for Jacob to assist him at home. Roxanne said the Community Action Agency was very helpful. Through them she met Jan Ulrich, a

counselor for the Early Head Start program. "She was really great and gave me tremendous support when I needed it," Roxanne said.

Roxanne also credits her FIA worker, Chris Garbarczyk for helping her and always believing in her. Garbarczyk returned the compliment, saying Roxanne's honesty and determination have always impressed her.

"When I first spoke with her I was really impressed," Chris said. "In our first conversation Roxanne said she thought that she had received too many food stamps. It turned out she was correct. She was really honest and always reported any change.

"Whenever I stopped by during a home call and asked Roxanne how things were going, she always said she would continue to work hard to get ahead and she

would never give up. I always believed her."

Local recognition

At the Jan. 26 event Roxanne was presented with gifts from Jackson County FIA Board chair Jerry Emmons and Jackson County FIA director Renee Hayward. Roxanne received a gift certificate to a local store and her three children received gifts as well.

Director Howard concluded the ceremony with a presentation to Roxanne of an Achiever certificate.

"Roxanne has faced many challenges to make a better life for her and her family," said Howard. "Today she is on a path that will inspire her personal development. She is a wonderful role model and, through her example, her children will learn that determination and hard work can lead to success."



Roxanne Taylor with children (clockwise from right) Shannon, Jacob and Cassandra Lockwood.

Spotlighting FIA staff

Three in Food Stamp Payment Accuracy projects

Chuck Dunn, an FIA employee since 1975, is currently assigned to the food stamp policy unit in the Office of Financial Assistance Programs. He is responsible for ongoing monitoring and tracking of reinvestment spending. Chuck also serves on various payment accuracy committees and councils that develop and implement training activities, surveys, and job aids for the field.

Another aspect of Chuck's work pertains to food stamp quality control (QC) audit results. He reviews all exceptions to ensure that the auditors have applied policy appropriately and resolves any discrepancies with QC staff. Significant savings in cited QC misissuances have been realized from this activity.

Audit reconsideration requests from the field are sent to him and he makes recommendations as to whether these requests can be supported and forwarded to QC. He performs analyses of the overall QC results to help formulate future policy decisions.

Married, with four children, Chuck enjoys pocket billiards in his leisure time. His future plans include...retirement! This would happen much quicker, he said, "If I can ever get in the hot seat on 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire!'"



Deb Patterson, a 25-year state employee is currently responsible for the coordination of some of the activities for Outstate and Wayne County Technical Assistance Teams (TAT). She has worked with TAT members in development of the newly revised food stamp targeted case reading form. Deb is responsible for reports generated from the TAT



From left: Helen Anderson, Chuck Dunn and Deb Patterson

activities and coordinates an information sheet for all family independence managers. She makes assignments, tracks development and releases the finished product to all first and second line FIM in the state.

Deb was the conference chairperson for last fall's FIM conferences and is a co-chair on the Future Conference Committee. She will be the lead on the administrative support work group to help identify training issues for administrative support that relate directly to food stamp payment accuracy.

Mecosta County, Osceola County, FIA Zone 3 and Outstate Operations are some of the areas Deb has been assigned in her FIA career. She is married with 2 children and nine grandchildren. She said her future plans include "resting some-time."



Helen Anderson, an FIA employee since 1997, is currently a food stamp payment specialist in the FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management. Last summer she chaired the 23 "Hot Potatoes" conferences.

Helen was responsible for site selection, hotel logistics, contract

negotiations and payment invoice processing. Marketing and promoting the FIA to Michigan hotels, convention and visitors bureaus for future conferences keeps Helen extremely busy.

Helen has other duties related to food stamp accuracy efforts. She plans and coordinates the Big 14 monthly meetings and will assist Michigan's 2001 BIG TEN delegation at the national food stamp accuracy conference in Cleveland.

A graduate of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Helen is currently working toward a master's degree in career and technical education at Ferris State University in Big Rapids. Her work experience includes two years at Muskegon County FIA, admissions counselor-recruiter duties for the U. S. Job Corps Program and Grand Valley State University in Allendale, and managing sales and catering for the Hilton Hotel in Muskegon. She is an adjunct faculty member at Baker College in Muskegon.

Helen is mother to two families—three adult children and children ages 10 and 4.

—Anne Sigourney

Customer Service Excellence

A new initiative to help FIA employees work toward satisfying relationships with customers and each other

■ For more information on Customer Service Excellence contact Bill Patrick, director of the Family Independence Agency's Office of Professional Development, at (517) 373-2005 or by email at PatrickB2@state.mi.us

Beginning with state welfare reform efforts in the mid-1990s, the FIA began to serve a more diverse population than in the past and began to change certain long-held practices. When AFDC was ended by welfare reform in 1996, FIA field specialists began working with customers more intensively than ever before on ways to help them achieve self-sufficiency through work, income and other productive personal or family activities.

Eventually this helped change the traditional client-manager relationship to more of a customer-broker relationship. To encourage the burgeoning relationship between field specialists and customers, the FIA in spring 1999 began to take steps to ensure that everyone who needed services would have a positive experience in their interaction with the Family Independence Agency. The FIA decided customer service training for its employees might be a way to support this and began efforts to implement an employee training program. An event later that year made it clear the agency was moving in the appropriate direction.

The FIA commissioned a survey that year to better understand its impact in communities, and the survey response was delivered in

autumn 1999. Using focus groups and telephone surveys, the survey—conducted by a well-known private

“restaurant experience” that is discussed in **Customer Service Excellence**, the new FIA employee training program.

What is the restaurant experience? Think about the last visit you made to a restaurant and what you remember about it. Is your strongest memory of the food or the service? For most people it's the service we remember even though we consciously believe we are going to a restaurant because of the food.

Through the survey, the Family Independence Agency learned that when customers came to its offices in the welfare reform era, the same rule applied: customers came to the FIA wanting cash assistance, food stamps or a similar service, but often went home thinking about the customer service they received. Furthermore, Family Independence Agency employees had no

idea their customers had such expectations.

Through the Office of Human Resources, the FIA contracted with Wilson Learning Corporation, a global leader in assessment and learning systems for Fortune 500 and emerging organizations, to assist in developing the training.

Initially the FIA convened two focus groups comprised of a



Trainer Colleen Cooper discusses the “bicycle” model of customer service training. The bicycle represents four dimensions of service—rear wheel technical skills, front wheel people skills, handlebar self-management skills, and flexibility represented by the sprocket and gears.

Lansing, Mich. firm—reported a third of FIA customers believed they were treated poorly by Family Independence Agency workers. It suggested FIA customers develop their worldview of the agency based on the relationship they develop with the first FIA employee they contact.

This information helped the Family Independence Agency understand that working with human services customers is much like the

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Customer Service Excellence

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variety of agency staff from different programmatic and geographic areas of the state. One group developed customer service values and competencies; the other validated the work of the first and developed customer service behaviors.

The training was first provided to about 600 receptionists, back-up receptionists and their supervisors in August and September 1999, with Wilson Learning conducting all the sessions. In early 2000, the FIA determined all 13,000 of its

standing of how this ties into Family Independence Agency priorities. This session includes discussion on actions that can be taken to improve customer service and identify activities that can prepare staff for the two-day training.

■ **Customer Service Excellence**, the two-day training program for employees and their supervisors.

■ **Managing Customer Service Excellence**, a one-day day follow-up session exclusively for supervisors and managers, offers coaching skills

Customer Service Excellence is based on a four-step process for interacting with customers—open, interact, ask for an expression of satisfaction, and conclude. The training includes instruction and role-play in how to make workplace adaptations for these different customer conditions:

■ **Comfortable**—the customer who believes his or her needs and expectations will be met.

■ **Indecisive**—the customer who can't make up his or her mind or may not even know what (s)he wants.

■ **Insistent**—the customer who makes demands and requires you to take some kind of immediate action.

■ **Irate**—the angry customer who needs to blow off steam before you can begin to work with him or her.

Why Customer Service Excellence? FIA director Doug Howard summarizes the reason in the video shown at the beginning of each class when he says:

"I believe Family Independence Agency staff want to do well. I believe we do very well. I have visited nearly 60 local FIA offices and I have visited most of our juvenile facilities. I have been very impressed with the quality of our staff.

"I believe our staff by and large do embrace the concept of customer service. What we do in our daily work makes a difference for children and families in Michigan and it's important that we think about how we treat people. I'm not suggesting that we need to find new and different ways to say yes more and no less.

"In fact, I suspect that we may need to continue to say no quite often. And we are in the unenviable position of telling people that we can't

Customer Service Excellence is based on a four-step process for interacting with customers—open, interact, ask for an expression of satisfaction, and conclude. The training includes instruction and role-play in how to make workplace adaptations for four different customer conditions.

employees in Michigan should attend customer service training. The Family Independence Agency worked with Wilson Learning to customize the training, conduct pilot sessions and train-the-trainer sessions. FIA trainers and private contractors were instructed in how to deliver the courses.

In August 2000, after three pilot sessions, **Customer Service Excellence** training began statewide for all Family Independence Agency employees. Customer Service Excellence training consists of three parts:

■ **Connection Events** for all supervisors, managers and directors, to provide an overview of what will be included in the training and under-

to reinforce customer service principles learned and sustains continued application of the ideas back in the office.

This three-pronged approach is based on training principles that greatly enhance the likelihood that information learned will be applied after the training.

Customer Service Excellence teaches FIA staff members in all job classifications a number of customer and personal skills. Employees are encouraged to apply the skills when dealing with both internal and external customers. Equally as important, it includes training in personal self-management skills to help staff deal with their personal reactions to customer interactions.



Customer Service Excellence participants point out Family Independence Agency values represented in the training—customer focus, efficiency, integrity, partnership and safety. Pictured are Michelle Malmquist (left) of Ingham County FIA and Camala Hoffman from FIA Office of Human Resources in Lansing.

meet their needs, but how we do that is important.”

So far, employee feedback has been positive. In an evaluation recently conducted, 96 percent of participants rated the course as very useful, useful, or somewhat useful.

Training will continue throughout 2001. Starting in 2002, sessions will be offered periodically for new staff.

Customer Service Excellence is a significant endeavor that meets several identified Family Independence Agency needs and goals.

First, this is the first time in many years all employees shared a common training experience. Typically training is directed to a particular group of employees such as

management staff or Children’s Protective Services Workers. By requiring this training for everyone, at all levels, the agency has placed emphasis on the importance of customer service and working together.

Second, the training reinforces the Family Independence Agency’s strategic plan. The FIA vision, values and critical success factors all address the importance of having a customer focus.

Third, the Connection Events and Managing Customer Service Excellence training give supervisors the tools to both prepare staff to attend training, and to reinforce the skills after the training. Supervisors play an important role in implementing

the concepts taught. The training design recognizes this by sending supervisors to twice as much training as their staff.

Finally, the FIA helps meet its vision of being a national leader in providing customer service. It is not unusual for private sales and service organizations to train their staff in customer service, but in the experience of Wilson Learning, this is a relatively new concept in the public sector.

What started as a revolution in the delivery of public assistance is ending as a new way of doing business for the FIA, one geared at developing and maintaining satisfactory relationships with customers, both in the field and in the office.

Maxey School emerges as Griffis' "campus of 2001"

New construction, improved programs, quality staff all contribute to better outcomes

By Mary Hedgepeth, Department Analyst

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WHITMORE LAKE – When Nelson G. Griffis, Ph.D. arrived on the campus of the W. J. Maxey Boys Training School in the summer of 1998, he had a vision in mind. That was more than two and one-half years ago and that vision continues to evolve into transformations of safety, security, programming and physical surroundings.

Griffis is campus director for a state facility providing treatment and rehabilitation services to as many as 460 male juveniles adjudicated by courts. The school is located on M-36 near Whitmore Lake in Washtenaw County.

In the years since Griffis assumed direction of the campus, there has been a continual decrease in assaultive behaviors and escapes by youth. These are direct results of the "tightening of the ship" philosophy the campus has adopted.

"This place has to be good enough for our own children to either work at or to receive treatment," said Griffis at a recent staff forum. "Our youths' families have to be treated as we would want to be treated."

Most obvious are the changes in the campus' physical environment. Nearly \$40 million has been invested in new construction and upgrades to existing structures. The money has been well-spent creating a state of the art facility with technology features that rival any other facility of its type in the nation. The project is expected to be complete in the fall of 2001.

Emphasis on safety

Among the most significant changes



The high-secure buildings are designed in a pod layout, which utilizes safety glass to enhance total line of sight. The buildings are designed so that there are no blind corners.

are two new high-secure centers, the high-secure school and family visiting center that allow for full line of sight in all areas accessible

by youth and visitors. The architectural layout of the two 100-bed living units is based on a centralized pod design where all offices, youth rooms and day rooms are visible from the centralized operations office. Shatter-proof safety glass replaces brick walls throughout the centers, ensuring the full line of sight.

Maxey staff will be equipped

with a new, high tech "man down" personal alarm system that sounds an alarm if a staff person is in need of assistance. This security feature will pinpoint the location of the wearer when the alarm is activated, expediting the crisis response procedure. Staff will be issued a "man down" system and a set of new double-secure keys from campus Public

Safety upon clocking in for the day. The key-control policy has been in place at Green Oak Center—which houses serious juvenile offenders—and is proving to be an effective security measure.

The key-control policy is just one example of how Public Safety has become an integral department on campus. The number of Public Safety officers has been more than tripled from the crew of 13 officers employed at the time of Griffis' hire to a full-time staff of 40. All Public Safety officers are licensed first-responders for emergency medical situations. This department screens each visitor to the campus and will soon be responsible for monitoring the movement of all staff and youth on the campus.

Resident living areas

Youth bedrooms are designed in a single-bunk fashion with in-room toilet and sink. Individual



The security doors of the observation rooms in the new high-secure buildings allow for visibility of the youth at all times while maintaining safety for all.

shower rooms (versus group shower areas) along with the in-room toilet facilities eliminate two of the most common areas for youth-on-youth assaults and enhance resident privacy.

While security, bricks and mortar are important in an improving facility, Griffis also applied the “tightening of the ship” philosophy to the management team at Maxey.

The center developed centralized computer scheduling of staff to address the concern of having fresh, focused and ready to respond front line personnel. Management coverage has been expanded with a full-time midnight program manager and the rotational assignment of both a program manager and a member of the administrative team during all holidays and weekends.

Campus of 2001

The “campus of 2001” is one of specialized treatment. Youngsters residing and being treated on the campus bring special needs and the treatment programs are continually evolving to meet these challenges.

The “Maxey Model” pro-

vides what Griffis calls the gestalt from which all treatment originates. Gone are the days of positive peer culture and generic treatment. The campus has adopted the concepts of cognitive restructuring, balanced and restorative justice, therapeutic crisis intervention, sex offender treatment, substance abuse treatment, relapse prevention and intensive mental health programming.

Yesterday's program of peer modeling has been replaced by a more complex treatment method that addresses the complex nature of youth requirements in the 21st Century. When youths' therapeutic and behavioral issues are addressed through a focused program one can expect a decrease in acting out behaviors and recidivism. Statistics on the facility indicate this is taking place.

Interest is high as Maxey builds on its successes and transitions in this exciting time of change. Maxey is truly becoming the term coined by Dr. Griffis—the “campus of 2001”.



SWSS FAJ comes to Kalamazoo

What's SWSS FAJ? Low-fat cheese? Not quite.

By Joni St. Laurent, SWSS Project Office
Services Worker Support System (SWSS)
Telephone (517) 241-7980



Sharing a joyful moment when the first SWSS case opened in Kalamazoo are (left to right): Andi Brendle, SWSS project office; Jim Walters, children's services supervisor in Kalamazoo; Pat Anderson, juvenile justice worker who opened the first case (inset); and Paula Palmatier, FIA Software Development Division.

New cases arriving into foster care from protective services will be electronically transferred from SWSS/CPS mapper into SWSS FAJ. Once the cases are activated, the worker has an electronic case record on each of their children. The application will walk the user through registrations to case openings. In addition, it will be possible to share information between siblings, do program transfers, placement and payment changes, complete basic case changes and give the worker the ability to generate many of the letters and forms that are currently used. SWSS FAJ will provide supervisors access to supervisory functions, caseloads of their assigned staff, and the ability to generate reports on their workers caseloads.

After several years of hard

Contrary to what you may have heard, SWSS FAJ is not a type of low fat cheese coming to an FIA near you. SWSS FAJ is an acronym for the **S**ervices **W**orker **S**upport **S**ystem application that supports **F**oster care, **A**doption and **J**uvenile justice programs. SWSS FAJ is identified in the FIA Strategic Plan 2001 and meets several critical success factors including "continuously improve internal and external customer focused service delivery" through a common user interface.

In addition to supporting children's foster care, adoption and juvenile justice, SWSS FAJ provides information for caseload and program management and collects data to meet the requirements of the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. When fully implemented, SWSS will meet the

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federal requirements set forth for the State Automated Child Welfare Information System. SWSS is a comprehensive system designed to provide casework support for the workers delivering services in adult and children's services, Child Protective Services and the Adult Services Comprehensive Assessment Program (ASCAP) implemented in 1996.

What does this mean for the foster care, adoption and juvenile justice workers and supervisors? Initially, workers will need to activate any existing cases on SWSS FAJ.

work and concentrated effort, SWSS FAJ began piloting in Kalamazoo County on February 12, 2001. "We were successful getting the first case open Feb. 13," said Sue London, SWSS project office director. "Training got off to a good start as well. Kalamazoo has 11 trainees. I am very impressed how the training database is constructed and how it is working."

After the pilot is completed, a phased roll out is planned for the

continues next page

SWSS FAJ comes to Kalamazoo continues from page 14

remaining counties. Once we are sure the application is ready, it will take approximately 6 months to roll out the entire state. Counties have been grouped into waves for SWSS FAJ implementation. Each wave will go through a series of pre-implementation meetings prior to implementing the new system in their county.

A Central Office SWSS FAJ training team and county liaisons go through the process of creating workplans so each county is aware of what steps need to be accomplished leading up to their expected implementation date. To identify local office practices and current forms, each office creates a process map and outputs are analyzed with a focus on how the local office forms impact paperflow related to outputs generated by SWSS FAJ. By developing this business flow plan in advance of implementation, the SWSS FAJ Project Office and the local office can work together to identify obstacles and develop solutions prior to implementation.

As part of the preimplementation meetings, a simulation process has been developed to demonstrate the foster care, adoption and juvenile justice applications. This gives county liaisons and other selected staff early exposure to SWSS FAJ mechanics and supports change management strategies. The simulation process consists of taking an existing case and working the case through the SWSS FAJ system in a testing environment. Cases are selected from each of the programs so that the liaison will better under-

stand the SWSS FAJ application features in each program. During the simulation, county office staff receive exposure to the new system through hands-on experience.

How does Kalamazoo County feel about piloting SWSS? Jim

explanatory and very easy to use," she said. Hause feels SWSS FAJ will be a big help in collecting information regarding cases and is especially looking forward to the feature that "tracks where parents live for use in court reporting."

Photo story: Lots of socks



Wayne County FIA employees collected 1,848 pairs of socks and in February donated them to the Stone Pool Warming Center, a transitional facility that seeks shelter for homeless men, women and children. The sock drive also netted \$363 in cash donations, used to purchase underwear for the center to distribute. The warming center has a continuing unmet need for new, heavy, one-size-fits-all socks, especially for the homeless men who use the facility during winter months. Diana Pennerman of Operations Get Down Inc. (center), the agency that operates the warming center, accepts the donations from FIA Zone 8 manager Rheda Johnson and Wayne County FIA director Jerome Rutland.

Walters, the Kalamazoo County liaison, is a foster care supervisor. Walters said his staff have responded very positively to the SWSS FAJ application. Workers and supervisors are aware of the fact that SWSS FAJ will create a lot of work initially, but have a good understanding that this program is needed for casework support as well as reporting purposes. Lynn Hause a Kalamazoo County foster care worker, said she thinks the program is wonderful.

"The application is self-

She commented on moving toward a paperless file, saying: "It's great but a little scary in case the system goes down." She likes the idea she can ask for a specific form "and it will print it quickly and easily."

Louise Boulding, an administrative support person, has been working with the registration process. "I find it user-friendly and pretty basic to use," she said.

■ For more information on SWSS FAJ keep an eye out for our website that is currently under construction.

Job training program transforms lives

Dennis Lilly didn't know if he'd make it

By Rosemary Horvath, Staff Writer

Daily News (Greenville, Mich.)

■ This story was originally published on Feb. 9, 2001. It is reprinted in FIA Icon with permission of the Daily News.

SHERIDAN - Dennis Lilly didn't know if he'd make it. He spent 14 years at home caring for his wife stricken with epilepsy. He worked at carpentry, roofing, street maintenance, but, for the most part, he was unemployed. It hadn't been possible to carve out a living for his wife and three children without state assistance.

Then there was a lack of education. He quit school in his junior year of high school. He wondered, at 43, how could he survive in the world of work in spite of Michigan's mandatory job readiness-job search program (Work First) that left him with few options.

"I tried getting work before, but with my wife being ill, nobody could be with her. I didn't have a car and couldn't get around," said Lilly.

Highlighting events of the last five months, this modest man has turned from a life of destitution to a life with a future. The turning point came last September when Lilly encountered Work First, the program designed to connect recipients of the Family Independence Agency with the job market. After a job orientation, a caseworker referred Lilly to Goodwill Industries in Greenville.

A journey begins

"That's the best thing I've ever done - go through Work First and Goodwill," said the new wage earner. "It was a challenge - no doubt about it," he confessed.

He met the challenge with help from Dee Ann Sherwood, workforce development specialist, and Jim Scofield, onsite instructor. Scofield supervises Goodwill's work



Dennis Lilly, left, assembles gear shifters for the Ford Explorer at Wright Plastic Products in Sheridan, where he's in a Goodwill Industries onsite job-training program.

— Daily News photo/Greg DeKraker

training program at Wright Plastics. He started out with four people and one job five years ago.

Scofield instructs the basic principles of employment - showing up for work on time every day - calling when you can't come in. Scofield instills work ethics in some people who have no concept of employment responsibility.

"This is our testing ground," he said of the Wright Plastics site. "This is a community-based site. We'll perform work for Wright Plastics but it's our instructors and case managers."

He works with people ages 18 up to 55. Some are functionally illiterate. "A lot of people are not used to using their hands eight hours a day. We start out two days a week and gradually work up. With the general welfare-to-work population, most are physically and cognitively capable of working but their barriers are poverty, lack of transportation, day care," Scofield said.

Scofield recalled the early days working with Dennis Lilly. "He

wouldn't look me in the eye. He was so shy, ashamed. Now, it's unbelievable. He comes into work 30 minutes early and sets up the assembly for everyone."

Lilly graduated from the Goodwill program to a new job training program at Wright Plastics. He works on becoming a press operator. His background in the assembly area gives him a leg up on spotting inferior parts before they hit the press, he said. Lilly hasn't forgotten his early struggles.

"It was hard. The worst thing was my self-doubt. I didn't think I had the smarts to do this work. Jim helped me out a lot. Now I can give 110 percent," he said.

MichiganWorks!, which helps the Family Independence Agency implement work goals, helped Lilly acquire a reliable car. Sherwood is there to remove obstacles, like the car or finding reliable care for Mrs. Lilly, or rectifying a catastrophe that prevented Mrs. Lilly from getting her life-or-death medicine filled at a pharmacy.

Barriers still exist

A 40-hour minimum wage job doesn't solve all the problems and, sometimes, may even cause more, Sherwood said. "It costs money to go to work," she pointed out.

Even if a person has a car to get around, the car needs gasoline, insurance and maintenance. "It's hard for people to budget. The problems people in poverty have are much greater than most of us can imagine," she said.

Much of what she and others do through Goodwill is help people

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Midtown CFS open house tinged with sadness

Event remembers former Wayne County manager Ed Ayoub

By Steve Gershman, Zone IX office
Wayne County Family Independence Agency
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DETROIT—The March 5 open house at the Midtown Child and Family Services (CFS) District was tinged with sadness due to the absence of its district manager, Edward A. Ayoub, who died Jan. 11 at the young age of 47.

Formerly known as the Magnolia-Boulevard District, Midtown CFS becomes the fifth CFS district in Wayne County. It is headed by interim manager Margaret Lewis and interim program manager Valerie



Edward Ayoub

Mr. Ayoub, now known as the Edward A. Ayoub Memorial Conference Room. A plaque commemorating the event was placed outside the conference room.

The late Mr. Ayoub's wife, Susan Ayoub, his children and members of his family were gracious enough to attend this event and unveil the plaque.

Wayne County FIA managers, Georgia Cambell of the Forest-Ellery District office and Josh Mack of the Fullerton-Jeffries District, spoke of Ed's compassion and gentle nature while displaying his leadership skills and commitment to both internal and external customers. Others paid tribute to Mr. Ayoub at the open house including Clarence Willis, Jr., Wayne County FIA deputy director, Margaret Warner, FIA Zone X manager, and Richard Stylski, Zone IX manager. Mr. Ayoub's 25-year service award was presented to Mrs. Ayoub at the occasion.

Ed was the last manager of the former Magnolia-Boulevard District and the first manager of Midtown CFS. He began his career with the Department of Social Services in 1975 as an eligibility specialist at the old Kercheval

Nunn. The open house highlight was the dedication of the midtown conference room in memory of the late

District. Ed received his bachelor's degree with a double major in psychology and sociology the year before from the University of Michigan.

He worked as a services specialist at the Inkster District from 1977-86. During that time Ed earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Detroit while working full-time. In 1986, Ed was promoted to youth residential director at W.J. Maxey Training School. Julie Jenkins, a colleague and friend of Ayoub's remembered him at the event.

"Ed was a marvelous program manager," she said. "He demonstrated care and concern for his staff. He guided, counseled, and supported them. He was an excellent role model for the delinquents in his care. Ed was also a good friend. He listened and did not judge."

Mr. Ayoub brought those characteristics to the Magnolia-Boulevard District, where he served as district manager from 1996 until the office closure and as district manager of midtown CFS. His leadership skills, management style and warm character were admired by all that came in contact with him.

He was involved in the local Arabic community and St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia. Although plagued by serious illness, Ed continued to work because of his strong work ethic.

We have all lost a good friend and colleague. We remember the words of Georgia Cambell, who said, "Ed was a man of integrity, compassion, and commitment." We will miss you Ed. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to his family.

Work First

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"change their way of thinking. We help them identify skills, get along with co-workers. We write out vocational goals," Sherwood said.

Goodwill offers people in their program a safety net. They all work so closely together that she and Scofield look upon the program as an extension of their own lives.

"There are so many frustrations. I hear a lot of the same things - my baby is sick - I don't have the Medicaid card yet - day care forms weren't filled out right. Instead of looking at the situation for what it is, they see themselves as having failed in some way," Sherwood said.

As the former welfare client earns money working, there's less monetary assistance coming from the state. Still, neither Sherwood, Scofield nor Lilly wants to go back to the old way. "They experience difficulty at first but we begin to see pride and self-respect materialize," Sherwood said. "I do believe in the power of work - it does restore dignity."

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New Children's Trust Fund license plate unveiled

CTF chair, Secretary of State show it off at Lansing event with five other new plates

LANSING—Michigan motorists got their first glimpse of Michigan's latest fundraising license plates March 1 including the new children's plate to raise funds for Children's Trust Fund.

Funds generated through sales of children's specialty plates will support the Children's Trust Fund (CTF), an independent unit in state government administered through the FIA.

"I am pleased to unveil the final six fundraising license plates," said Secretary of State Candice Miller. "(They) provide residents the perfect opportunity to financially support their favorite cause."

The new plates were available for purchase beginning April 2. Money from specialty license plate sales will support six state-supported causes including the CTF.

The Children's Trust Fund supports local projects around Michigan to defeat child abuse and neglect. It receives no state budget allocation and operates through non-state revenue sources including donations, grants and interest.

The six plates feature a colorful logo and a representative word or phrase highlighting the cause:

- **Agricultural Heritage:** Highlighting a red barn, silo and rolling green fields crowned with the sun, the Agricultural Heritage Plate supports agriculture educational programs for grades K-12.

- **Children:** With red hearts and a touching message of "Just Love 'Em," the Children's Trust Fund Plate raises funds to prevent child abuse and neglect.

- **Lighthouse:** With its striking red-and-white stripes, the White Shoal Lighthouse is set against the blue waters of Lake Michigan to symbol-



Children's Trust Fund chairperson Pam Posthumus (left), state Sen. Bev Hammerstrom (center) and Secretary of State Candice Miller with the new children's fundraising license plate.

ize the need to preserve all 124 of Michigan's lighthouses. The White Shoal Lighthouse is located 20 miles west of the Mackinac Bridge.

- **Veterans Memorial:** Featuring a pair of silver dog tags as a reminder of the men and women who have served their country, the Veterans Memorial Plate supports the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

- **Water Quality:** A red sailboat cuts through Michigan's deep blue waters under a cheery orange sun, bringing the message of the importance of protecting the state's water, our most valuable resource.

- **Wildlife Habitat:** Against a backdrop of trees, the distinctive black-and-white loon and her chick rest in quiet waters, highlighting the need to protect Michigan's nongame wildlife and habitat.

Residents buying a specialty license plate will pay \$35 in addition to their annual registration fee.

Twenty-five of the \$35 is earmarked for the cause with the remaining \$10 paying for the production and mailing of the license plate. Residents wishing to personalize their plate pay an extra \$30. A specialty disability plate is also available.

Every time a specialty plate is renewed, a \$10 fee is collected for the cause. Residents with personalized plates will also pay a \$15 personalized plate fee when renewing.

Specialty plates may be ordered by mail, fax or in person at a Secretary of State branch office. Order forms will be included with registration renewal notices beginning April 2. Residents may also obtain order forms online through the Secretary of State web site: www.sos.state.mi.us/updates/newplates.html All specialty license plates will be processed and mailed to customers from the department's central office in Lansing.

Medicaid beneficiaries give health care high ratings

Beneficiaries grade practitioners, service higher than fee-for-service customers and other insured parties

■ For more information contact Carolyn Cassin at Michigan Department of Community Health, telephone (517) 335-5182

LANSING—Medicaid recipients are happy with the health care they receive through the program and give high grades to their medical care providers. That is among findings from a recent survey of Medicaid recipients commissioned by Michigan Department of Community Health.

The department released the 2000 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Report Feb. 21. The survey focused on the 27 Michigan health plans that served adult and child Medicaid beneficiaries in managed care during 1999.

“The results indicate persons receiving Medicaid are pleased with the services they are receiving not only from their doctor, but from their Qualified Health Plan,” said Community Health Department director James K. Haveman Jr. “With the changes we implemented last year in the re-bid for managed care, we will continue to improve services to children and families.”

Michigan Department of Community Health administers the state Medicaid program. Qualified Health Plans are group providers of service to Medicaid customers akin to a health maintenance organization.

The survey measured how Medicaid beneficiaries feel about their health care in regards to getting needed care, getting care quickly, how well doctors communicate, courteous and helpful office staff and customer service.

The Department of Community Health commissioned Market Facts, a survey company specializing in health care and other consumer satisfaction surveys, to conduct the surveys following standard Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study protocol. The adult survey included 14,352 respondents and the child survey included 8,466 respondents.

The format is a mail survey with telephone follow-up. Michigan is one of many states to use this particular survey tool. The survey of adult Medicaid beneficiaries found:

- 75 percent gave their personal doctor or nurse an 80 percent or higher rating. This compares with ratings of 72 percent from Medicaid fee-for-service beneficiaries and 74 percent from Michigan commercial insurance beneficiaries.
- 76 percent gave their medical specialist an 80 percent or higher rating. This compares with ratings of 72 percent from Medicaid fee-for-service beneficiaries and 76 percent from Michigan commercial insurance beneficiaries.
- 70 percent gave all doctors and other health providers overall an 80 percent or higher rating. This compares with ratings of 66 percent from Medicaid fee-for-service beneficiaries and 75 percent Michigan commercial insurance beneficiaries.
- 69 percent reported that getting care was not a problem and 78 percent said they usually or always received their care quickly.
- 85 percent said their doctors usually or always communicate well and 89 percent reported that the office staff was usually or always courteous and helpful.
- 60 percent said they had no problems with their health plan customer service and 59 percent gave their health plan an 80 percent or higher rating.
- 64 percent said they were advised to quit smoking on at least one visit.

The survey of parents of child Medicaid beneficiaries found:

- 78 percent said the doctors or nurses usually or always discussed their child’s behavior and growth with them.
- 75 percent gave their child’s personal doctor or nurse an 80 percent or higher rating.
- 74 percent gave all doctors and other health providers of their child an 80 percent or higher rating.
- 77 percent report that getting care for their child was not a problem and 82 percent said their child usually or always received care quickly.
- 69 percent said they were reminded to bring their child, under the age of two, to the doctor for shots and drops.
- 88 percent said their child’s doctor or other health care provider usually or always communicates well and 80 percent said they usually or always explained things so children could understand.
- 90 percent said that office staff is usually or always courteous and helpful.
- 66 percent reported that they had no problems with their child’s health plan customer service.
- 64 percent gave their child’s health plan an 80 percent or higher rating.

Hardee's, FIA shared the warmth in the U. P.

Feb. 9 promotion generates almost \$1,000 for local heating needs

On February 9, seven Hardee's restaurants in the Upper Peninsula participated with county Family Independence Agency offices in the annual "Share the Warmth" promotion to raise funds for local heating needs.

As a result of the one-day promotion, Hardee's will donate 100 percent of the proceeds from each Sausage & Egg Biscuit sold that day to the local Family Independence Agency to help local citizens with their home heating needs this winter.

Preliminary figures from the promotion indicate the seven Michigan stores raised \$945, an increase over last year's sales at six stores totaling \$776. Itemized sales per store included: Iron Mountain: 48; Ironwood: 50; Manistique: 79; Escanaba: 95; Munising: 101; Marquette: 269 between two stores; and Houghton: 303. Eleven Northwest and Midwestern states participated in the 2001 promotion, raising \$62,948.

The promotion was conducted during regular breakfast hours on Friday, Feb. 9 when customers could purchase a Sausage & Egg Biscuit for \$1 tax included. All money collected from each biscuit sold is returned to local communities for winter heating service.

"Hardee's "Share the Warmth" campaign is designed to raise funds and create a greater awareness of the needs of local citizens," said Dave Schauer, field marketing manager for Hardee's.

In fiscal year 2000, the last year where records are complete, there were more than 600 families in the Upper Peninsula counties participating in "Share the Warmth" that received emergency cash assistance from the FIA to help with heating needs.

■ For more information on "Share the Warmth", contact Amy Hindman at Jordan Associates in Oklahoma City by phone: (405) 507-6278 or email: ahindman@jordanet.com

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